

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Newly-added Claims 23-44 are supported by the specification and the original claims. Accordingly, no new matter is believed to have been added to the present application by the amendments submitted above.

REMARKS

Claims 23-44 are pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants would like to thank Examiner Boykin for the helpful and courteous discussion held with their representative on May 20, 2008. During the discussion, amendments to overcome the outstanding rejections were discussed. The following remarks expand on the discussion with the Examiner.

The present invention relates to a method of desolvating a polymer solution, comprising:

(a) steam stripping solvent from a polymer solution in an upstream desolvation tank;
(b) steam stripping solvent from the polymer solution in a downstream desolvation tank

where

the upstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion,

downstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion,

the liquid phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank and the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank are connected by a pipe, and

at least one opening-degree adjusting mean is fixed to the pipe; and

(c) controlling pressures such that a pressure difference ($\Delta P = P_2 - P_1$) between pressure (P_2) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and pressure (P_1) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank is larger by from 0.005 to 0.6 MPa than a pressure difference ($\Delta P_0 = P_{20} - P_{10}$) between pressure (P_{20}) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and a pressure (P_{10}) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank when the opening-degree adjusting mean is fully opened.

See Claim 23.

The present invention also relates to a method of desolvating a polymer solution, comprising:

- (a) steam stripping solvent from a polymer solution in an upstream desolvation tank;
- (b) steam stripping solvent from the polymer solution in a downstream desolvation tank

where

the upstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion,

downstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion,

the liquid phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank and the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank are connected by a pipe, and

at least one opening-degree adjusting mean is fixed to the pipe; and

- (c) controlling pressures such that a pressure difference ($\Delta P = P_2 - P_1$) between pressure (P2) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and pressure (P1) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank is 0.036 MPa or larger.

See Claim 34.

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP 2001-329016 in view of JP 62-97601 is respectfully traversed.

As discussed with the Examiner, the cited references fail to suggest desolvating a polymer solution as specified in Claims 23 and 34. Accordingly, withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

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The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully traversed. The newly-added are proper method claims. In view of the foregoing, the claims are definite within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Accordingly, withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



James J. Kelly, Ph.D.
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 41,504

Paul J. Killos
Registration No. 58,014

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/07)